

IT'S MY PARTY AND I'LL CRY IF I WANT TO by JO HARDY

CHARACTERS

LUCY

STELLA

TINA

BECKY

MINA

The play requires these five girls to play a variety of other roles, constantly swapping roles.

The main character girls themselves are supposed to be about fourteen years old.

Lasting about half an hour, this play is an ideal examination piece for GCSE.

THE SLEEP-OVER

It is Lucy's fourteenth birthday.

When the lights come up the five girls are asleep in Lucy's bedroom. The set need not be realistic: large mobile phones, lipsticks, love hearts, etc. make a fun and symbolic set. After a few seconds there is the insistent 'beep' of a mobile phone and Mina jumps up.

MINA
Text message!

All the girls jump up and gather excitedly around the mobile. It is noticeable, even at this early stage, that Stella is elbowed away by the others.

MINA
Oh ... [*Beginning to cry.*] He doesn't love me ...!

There is general consternation until Tina has an idea, feels in the pocket of her pyjamas and pulls out a packet of Lovehearts. She offers one to Mina who reads it then shows it to Tina.

TINA
He loves you!

The girls squeal and cheer and the Lovehearts are handed around.

BECKY *reading*
Hug me! [*Excited response.*]
TINA *reading*
Tease me! [*Excited response.*]
LUCY *reading*
Loverboy! [*Very excited response.*]
STELLA *reading*
No way...

Silence, but it is broken by Mina, who is staring with great respect out into the audience.

MINA *with reverence which borders on adoration*
Top Shop!

THE SHOPPING TRIP

BECKY *playing mother to Tina as the rest of the girls become shop window dummies of a somewhat downbeat nature*

Come on. We're going to get your new school clothes. Primark.

TINA
Not Primark, Mum. Top Shop. Pleeease!

BECKY
Nothing wrong with Primark. Look. Shall we buy you some new pants?

TINA *in an agony of embarrassment*

I don't need pants. Don't talk so loud. And anyway, I want thongs, not pants. I want to go to ...

BECKY

You aren't wearing those things. They aren't warm enough. You're having proper knickers. [*Becky raises the volume on the word 'knickers' and Tina dies of embarrassment.*] What about this nice navy jumper?

TINA

I hate navy. I want to go ...

BECKY

Or these trousers?

TINA

No. Everybody will laugh at me. Can we go to ...?

BECKY

Oh. For goodness sake! We'll have a look.

The models suddenly look very pleased with themselves, displaying an altogether more confident pose. Tina is now dragging her mother from model to model.

TINA

Mum! These trousers! They're fab. Can I have them?

BECKY

No.

TINA

This belt. I love it!

BECKY

I'm not buying that.

TINA *examining a pair of shoes worn by someone in the audience*

These shoes ...?

BECKY

No.

TINA *as they finally approach the last model*

This top. Pleeeeeease, mum ...

BECKY *after a long hesitation in which Tina wills her to say yes*

Well. I must admit it's a nice garment. Well made.

TINA *visibly appearing to thank the Goddess of everything fashionable*

It's really nice. All the seams finished off and stuff. [*She clearly has no idea what this means but has heard her mother say it, often.*]

BECKY

I like a garment that's well made.

TINA *nodding vigorously*

Yeah, it's really well made. I like it 'cos it's well made ... and it's ...

BECKY

But are you sure they'll let you wear it for school?

TINA *almost nodding her head off*

They'll definitely let me wear it for school. They like you to wear ... well made ... things.

BECKY

Have they got one in your size?

TINA *who checked that long ago*

This is my size.

BECKY *taking the garment*

Right. How much? [*She reads the price tag.*] Forty five pounds!! I'm not paying forty five pounds for ...

TINA *on her knees, in agony*

It's forty four pounds ninety nine, mum and it's ever so well made pleeeeeease ...

BECKY

No. Put it back. [*She drags her absolutely distraught daughter out.*] I need a drink!

THE PARTY

There is an instant change of scene. Lucy shouts 'Cider!' and produces a four-can pack of Woodpecker. She hands these out to everybody but Stella.

LUCY

Sorry Stella. I've only got four, but there's some pop in the fridge if you go and ...

But it's too late. because Steps '5678' - or anything topical and 'girlie' - suddenly blares out and all the girls discard their cans and begin to line dance.

ALL GIRLS

Steps!

Part way through the dance, Lucy leaves the line and walks to the audience. The music is turned down but the rest of the girls continue with the dance.

LUCY

It's my birthday today and I'm fourteen years old. I've been a teenager for more than a year! And it's great 'cos I've been to Macdonalds for dinner and mum didn't make me go to Grandma's, and I'm having a sleepover, and I can have all my friends round, but I've got to have Stella 'cos mum always makes me, 'cos her mum's my mum's best friend. But that doesn't matter. We'll pretend she's not there. And then I'm having a party, and I'm having cool food, and cider. And presents. And guess what? Mum says I can invite some boys!

On the word 'boys' Tina, Mina and Becky immediately come out of their dance routine as boys, slouching, talking in monosyllables and using as many exaggerated 'boy' gestures and expressions as possible.

THE BOYS

BOYS

Wicked! Skateboard. Suck it! Chips. Etc. etc.

STELLA *as narrator in a natural history documentary, in a patronising whisper*

And if we look carefully, we will see the young male of the species in his natural habitat, outside the chip shop. Notice the dried up chewing gum, nub ends and rivers of spit, which he clearly feels comfortable with. The traditional stance, as you can clearly see, is not quite upright. The male on the right wears the chains which can be widely witnessed on this species, generally draped around the body in an unbecoming fashion; the male on the left wears the impossibly baggy pants with the crotch at knee level. Ah yes. And while we're on that subject, observe the scratching of the crotch area, which is apparently part of a complex mating ritual. The method of transport used by these young males, who, incidentally, have difficulty walking due to excessive dragging of the feet, varies considerably. Here we have bicycles and skateboards, all of which are, as is normal, disproportionate to the size of the body. Now, if you listen carefully, you might hear the traditional mating calls ...

BOYS *in the midst of loud farting and belching they see Stella and Lucy approaching*
Girls! Girls! [*Staring at Lucy's breasts.*] 'lo, Lucy ...

LUCY *and throughout this speech the 'boys' continue to stare at her breasts*

I'm having a party tonight. Cider and everything. You can come if you want.

BOYS

Fanks. 'lo Stella. [*Once again staring at breast level.*] Fanks Lucy. [*As they go.*] Look at that arse ... tits on that ... etc.

EXTRACT TWO

GOSSIP

Gossip. Gossip
Chatter Chatter. Bitch.
Caroline's a slapper.
Sophie is a witch
She's going out with Nigel
The one with all the blackheads
Amy saw them kissing
Down behind the bikesheds.

Gossip. Gossip
Chatter Chatter. Bitch.
The bullies captured Jason.
And threw him in the ditch.
My little brother's awful
Killing should be lawful
Did you hear what Sir did?
Teachers should be murdered.

Gossip. Gossip.
Chatter Chatter. Bitch.
I copied Sharon's homework
It went without a hitch
What's that thing she's wearing?
She really is a dog.
Gemma's anorexic
And Josie is a hog.

Gossip. Gossip.
Chatter Chatter. Bitch.
Andy's kicking Adam
And Harry's smacking Titch
Flirting is my hobby
But I'm still in love with Robbie
I love him. It's too true
And Angelina the ballerina
Looks like Miss Piggy in her tutu!

STELLA

And now they're going to read Problem Pages. I could write ten years' worth. perhaps that's what I'll do when I get a job. Write Problem Pages for a magazine. They don't want me here. I feel stupid. I'll be glad when I'm grown up. I wonder where I'll be in ten years' time.

THE FUTURE

Mina brings in a mobile phone and briefcase, which she gives to Stella, who assumes the pose of confident, prosperous business woman.

MINA addressing audience

Stella eventually became a very wealthy and successful business woman. She edits a popular woman's magazine. Who would have thought that?

TINA *indicating Becky, who has heaped up a pile of books*
And Becky is the perpetual student. This is her second degree course and she's already got a first. I don't think she'll ever leave University.
LUCY *indicating Tina, who now has a big stomach and two dolls*
And Tina said she didn't want children. Strange!
TINA *indicating Lucy, who has now sat down on the floor and pulled a blanket around herself*

Poor Lucy. None of us could have guessed that she would have ended up like that.
MINA *looking around the girls who have now frozen*
This is us in ten years' time. We must be twenty-four. That's really old ... But I can't see me. Where am I? I don't see me ... [*Beginning to panic.*] ... Everything's gone black!

EXTRACT from Production Notes

PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES, ETC.

INTRODUCTION: THEMES; THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS

The play works on several levels. partly, it is a romping exploration of the younger teen mind. Designed to be played by slightly older [GCSE] students, they should appreciate this candid look at 'what it was like to be a couple of years younger than this!' It should spark off many memories and associations - all of which will help with the playing of the piece.

There are playful swipes at the younger teenage boy, at older sisters, at families, much of which will be familiar ground for the actors. But there is a darker side running through. Balancing the 'girliness' of the teens is their cruelty to one of their own age - Stella. And Stella herself acts as an antidote to the other girls - more sensible, clearly clever - a reminder that not all girls are like Lucy and her friends.

By 'flash-forwards' to the future, the play is further balanced by what happens to the girls later on. Most of their futures are not dwelt on: Lucy, who ends up as a dropout, Tina - who doesn't want kids - but is constantly pregnant, these are reminders that in the party of life, there will be many tears ahead. The storyline in the future that is picked up and followed through is that of Mina, the popstar who blows herself out with the stress of the lifestyle and dies young - only two years after the 'party' that is the centre of this play. In fact, this storyline is begun around the time of that same party, when she enters a competition in a magazine to become a popstar for the day - and wins.

The somewhat bleak storyline is saved from being dismal by the snappy style and constant character and scene changes. Nonetheless, it is not an easy style to carry off, requiring talented and disciplined students who can switch paces and moods quickly and fluently.

CHARACTERS

Since the cast play a large number of characters, it is probably easier to list these, plus a few notes that differentiate the core characters.

LUCY plays a shop window dummy; future Lucy - a drop-out; sophisticated older teenager; reporter; member of backing group; woman caller to Judy's programme; different young teenage girl.

STELLA plays a shop window dummy; a boy's mum; future Stella - a business woman; sophisticated older teenager - Mina's elder sister; member of backing group; TV floor manager; reporter; newsreader.

TINA plays a teenage boy; future Tina - a pregnant mum; sophisticated older teenager; reporter; member of backing group; Judy. a bitchy chatshow host.

BECKY plays Tina's mother; teenage boy; future Becky - a perpetual student; sophisticated older teenager; Serena, of 'Blimey' magazine; reporter; member of backing group; Mina's manager; different young teenage girl.

MINA plays a shop window dummy; teenage boy; future Mina - the pop star.

There is little to differentiate Lucy, Tina and Becky when they are playing their main characters. they are all as 'girly' as can be - into fashion, gossip, celebrity stars, magazines, the problem pages and boys. All hate school.

There are one or two ironies that are written into the script - and these need careful pointing to emphasise them.

Lucy says on Page 7 that she'll never leave home - yet she becomes a drop-out, presumably homeless and living on the street.

Tina says she doesn't want to have babies on Page 10 but ends up constantly pregnant. She is also perhaps the most innocent of the young girls, showing an endearing lack of sophistication re-kissing, sex and so on, compared with the 'superior' pseudo-knowledge of the others. This could be a clue to playing her slightly differently - a follower, not quite so confident, nervous giggle - something like that.

Becky says she hates school and can't wait to leave - on Page 5 - yet ends up as the perpetual student, collecting degrees.

Mina is the lead part. We follow her tragic short life for the second half of the play. The other girls, except Stella, look up to her. She is clearly the lynchpin of the group - the most confident.

Stella acts as a contrast to the others. She is excluded by them whenever possible - the outsider. Sensible and a bit of a swat at school, she despises the silliness of the girls at the same time as she wishes she were one of them, just to be accepted. However, this doesn't stop her castigating Mina for her stupidity.

Once again there is a built-in irony to Stella's life. She becomes the editor of a popular magazine, despite saying she despises the values and attitudes formulated in young girls' minds by the same kind of magazines.

The hardest thing about this play is the constant changing of voice and movement to play all the different roles. Care should be taken to build in differences in voice tones, in particular - by pace or depth - when playing the core characters.

SETTING

This must be as neutral as possible, since it has to stand for a number of different areas. Best is the writer's own suggestion: a non-realistic setting composed of teen girl images: giant size lipsticks, mobile phones, love hearts, etc. Bright colours and/ or a quantity of pinks needed. Other than this, which is decoration to liven the set up and suggest the dazzle of the fast-moving script, you need a practical space offering different levels. A possibility would be a high level round two thirds of the outer perimeter, a mid level acting as a step-up, seating or just an alternative level. If these two levels could be wide on, say Stage left side and narrow along the back, this would allow for a number of possibilities:

The girls in Lucy's bedroom could drape themselves over the stepped levels, perhaps using the top wide level on the left as Lucy's bed.

The dummies range themselves along the back top two levels in different poses.

The backing group could perform on the top wide level ...

If possible, paint any rostra you use a bright colour which fits in with the other decorations...